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Eugene Patterson

The Johnson Brand

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WASHINGTON—Disparaged often as a merely political animal, President Johnson likes to point earnestly and a little sensitively to the character of his appointees.

The Johnson cadre now taking full form can hardly be called partisan, he points out. He adds that he simply sent for the best men, that none among them asked him for the job they got.

This President has, in truth, gone about staffing the government in unique ways. For his principal talent scout he did not choose a political adviser but a civil service professional, John Macy. Macy does operate loosely through the politically knowledgeable White House staff, but they report back to him and he recommends to the President. Their telephone inquiries cover the country and final selections are made from long lists of carefully weighed possibilities.

The faces fit no set forms. Nicholas Katzenbach, an abrupt and intense intellectual, and John Doar, a ruggedly reticent John Wayne type, were considered Kennedy men (even though Doar joined the Justice Department under Ike). But Mr. Johnson chose them for his own, on merit, as attorney general and chief of Justice's civil rights division respectively.

Secretary of the Treasury Henry Fowler is small and silver-haired, soft-spoken and pleasant—a Southerner. ("You fellows have a dynamic base down there in Atlanta," he says.) But the steel shows in his eyes, his mind is quick and his word is firm. He may work some quiet surprises.

Secretary of Commerce Conner is a strong man in a post that has not always been strongly filled. He has differed in the past and still does with some LBJ policies. A maverick and a man of action, he has about him a tough vitality that you sense in the top businessmen. He stopped for lunch in Atlanta a couple of years ago, when he was head of the Merck pharmaceutical empire, and I remember him then expressing some reservations about medicare. But not blind ones. He felt industrial retirement plans had created the inadequacy of medical care for the elderly masses, and he was searching his mind for some positive way whereby private employers might fill the gap before government did.

Of the new Johnson crop, one of the most impressive is Adm. W. F. (Red) Raborn Jr., who was sworn in Wednesday as chief of the CIA. Sandy-haired and weatherbeaten, Raborn is a hard-fisted administrator who demands the impossible. In developing the Polaris submarine missile years ahead of schedule, he got it. But he laughs off compliments about that. "I know what they mean when they call me the father of Polaris," he smiles. "They know how little the father has to do with the baby—and they know it's somebody else who really has to get the job done."

Raborn recalls with pleasure, incidentally, a recent trip to Callaway Gardens in Georgia. He says he has been a great admirer of Georgia Rep. Howard (Bo) Callaway since the congressman let him fish his well-stocked bass pond.